

COOKING UP

POLITICAL AGENDAS



#COOKUPPOLITICS

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The 'common cooking pot' has historical and political significance. At different moments in time, women in Latin America living under authoritarian regimes would create spaces to discuss politics and articulate actions of resistance. This strategy was also used to respond to severe economic and food crises. Although the practice is not common throughout the world, the political meaning and material use of the 'common cooking pot' can be translated across borders. From selecting the best seeds when harvesting, to giving the finishing touch to dishes full of flavor, women have passed on knowledge about food from one generation to the next. This intergenerational sharing of knowledge around food encompasses a rich set of spiritual and material relationships.

Rather than reinforcing gender roles that confine women to duties of social and reproductive labor (bearing the sole responsibility of 'cooking', 'caring' and 'feeding'), this Guide evokes the emancipatory potential of collective organizing and knowledge construction between women. The 'common cooking pot' enhances collective building and transmission of different ways of knowing between women. It recalls women's political subjectivities and their struggles against oppression. Throughout the guide, we choose to speak of 'cooks' instead of 'participants', and 'recipes' instead of 'experiences'. In this way, the metaphor of the cooking pot is able to break through the fictional borders that divide different aspects of women's lives (referred to as the private and public spheres). We hope this Guide will provide a grounded space for women in rural areas to 'cook up' political transformative agendas on the human right to adequate food and nutrition.



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1

BRINGING INGREDIENTS TOGETHER



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OBJECTIVE

Identify the main issues faced by women in rural areas in their struggle for the right to food and nutrition.

METHODOLOGY: BUILDING A MIND MAP

In order to achieve the objective, the group co-constructs a Mind Map. A Mind Map is a creative way of expressing and organizing ideas and reflections. The Mind Map can be built on a wall or a board.

STEP 0: Cooks introduce themselves, including their names and anything they would like to share about themselves. To get started, cooks can also say which of their favorite ingredients/foods, they would like to bring to the imaginary pot.

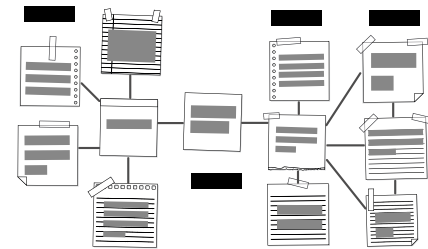
STEP 1: Based on each of their different lived experiences and perspectives, cooks write down or draw each of their concerns and actions affecting their right to food and nutrition, as well as any actions undertaken by their movements, organizations and communities to counter such situations.

STEP 2: The cards are affixed on the wall without following any specific order.



STEP 3: After the cards have been affixed, the following step is to group the cards on the wall into themes. The elements on the right to food and nutrition can serve as guidance to the facilitators' group on how to classify the issues and actions according to themes, for instance: access to land, seeds and natural resources.

TIP



When grouping into themes, the group might also find it useful to think of the different aspects of life linked to their right to food and nutrition. For example: land, water, seeds, working conditions, political participation, care work and violence.

2

CHOOSING OUR UTENSILS



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OBJECTIVE
Connect the identified community's struggles with international standards in CEDAW GR34.

METHODOLOGY: ANALYSING AND DISCUSSING CEDAW GR34

First, cooks are divided into groups according to the themes identified on BRINGING INGREDIENTS TOGETHER. Second, cooks reflect collectively on ways in which CEDAW GR34 contributes to their ongoing struggles on the right to food and nutrition, and evaluate missing links.

STEP 0: Cooks do an energizer. For example, cooks form a circle. One starts by saying, "I am going to the fields to find herbs." The next cook says "I am going to the fields to find herbs and wild fruits". Each cook repeats the list, and then adds an item. The aim is to be able to remember all of the items that people before you have added to the list.

STEP 1: Someone from the group provides a short summary of the outcomes achieved in the previous section.

STEP 2: Cooks are divided into groups according to the themes identified in BRINGING INGREDIENTS TOGETHER.

STEP 3: Each group discusses the following questions:

- A. What are the main elements in CEDAW GR34 linked to the everyday realities/problems that have been identified in the Mind Map?
- B. Which of the main elements in CEDAW GR34 are useful, or not, in your own work and struggle for the right to food and nutrition?
- C. In what ways is CEDAW GR34 useful where you are and how can we achieve its appropriation in our collectives, organizations and communities?

STEP 4: Answers and reflections to these questions are written down in each group.



STEP 5: All cooks present the outcomes of their discussions during a plenary using the fishbowl method

On how to set up the Fishbowl, please cf. page 12 of "Cooking Up Political Agendas" A Feminist Guide on the Right to Food and Nutrition for Women in Rural Areas.

3

SHARING OUR RECIPES



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OBJECTIVE

Learn from women's different lived experiences in the struggle for their right to food and nutrition in rural areas.

METHODOLOGY: SHARING LIVED EXPERIENCES

Before doing the exercises in this section, and if possible before the meeting, the facilitation group requests one or several cooks to prepare to share a lived experience in organizing a collective action on the right to food and nutrition.

STEP 0: Cooks do an energizer. For example, cooks stand in a circle and join hands. Keeping hands joined, cooks move in any way that they wish, twisting and turning and creating a knot. The knot must be unraveled without letting go of one another's hand.

Sharing our stories, an act of resistance: the facilitation group is encouraged to begin this section by reflecting about the power of "sharing with and learning from each other, finding commonality and creating networks of solidarity". It is important that the sharing of experiences is lived as a conversation, not a lecture, and as part of a collaborative process of co-creation in which "dreams are dreamt and strategies for change are conceived" (Feminist Realities Toolkit-AWID).

STEP 1: A cook provides a short summary of the outcomes achieved in CHOOSING OUR UTENSILS.

STEP 2: Everyone sits together in a circle around the speakers.

STEP 3: Each cook shares her lived experiences.

STEP 4: The floor is opened up for questions and comments from all cooks.

STEP 5: Facilitators review with the group the lived experiences that have been shared.

The following questions can help guide the discussion:

- » What were women able to achieve through the actions employed?
- » Which strategies did women use to reach the desired outcome?
- » Which were the difficulties and lessons learned?

	OUTCOME 1	OUTCOME 2	OUTCOME ...
DIFFICULTIES			
ACHIEVEMENTS			
MEANS			
STRATEGIES			
...			

**TIP**

A good way of structuring presentations is to suggest to cooks to prepare their stories by answering: who, what, when, where, why and how. The following advice might also be useful to consider: "The stories we share are lived shared experiences; they are not abstractions! Like any good story, however, we can understand more about them by looking at what is happening AND who the characters/actors are, the setting – political, emotional, physical – or situation around their story, the principles/values or motivations behind their actions, the problems they face or obstacles, the conditions that help them grow" (Feminist Realities Toolkit-AWID).

4

TASTING THE FLAVORS



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OBJECTIVE

Identify missing and complementary ‘tools’ and ‘actions’ to advance the struggle for the right to food and nutrition.

METHODOLOGY: DISCUSSING TOOLS AND ACTIONS

Cooks agree on a set of tools and actions that can contribute to their struggle for the right to food and nutrition.

Using the World Café methodology, all cooks divide into an agreed number of groups (called ‘tables’) and write down missing tools and actions needed to advance their struggles.

The aim of the world café methodology is to allow for ‘meaningful conversations’ to develop in ‘large group’ settings. Each group has a table host. All tables discuss for a specific amount of time. When the time is up, cooks go to the next table. You can calculate the total amount of time you need by dividing the time you have allocated to this section into the number of tables. This way, you will ensure that everyone participates at each table. For example, if you have two hours and four tables for this section, each table will discuss for 30 minutes.

STEP 0: Cooks do an energizer. For example, cooks gather in a circle and answer the question: If struggles tasted like something, what do you think they would taste like?

STEP 1: A member of the facilitation group provides a short summary of the outcomes obtained in the first three sections, BRINGING INGREDIENTS TOGETHER, CHOOSING OUR UTENSILS and SHARING OUR RECIPES.

STEP 2: Cooks divide themselves into the same groups and themes as they had done in CHOOSING OUR UTENSILS.

STEP 3: Each group gathers around a large sheet of paper and writes the group theme on top together with the following question: “What are we missing in order to advance?”

STEP 4: The person who volunteered to be the table host facilitates and takes note of the group discussions and writes them down in the large sheet of paper.

STEP 5: When time is up, cooks rotate to the next table. The host stays behind to introduce the question to the new group and to summarize the preceding discussion. The new cooks at that table then add their insights to the question, refining or modifying the contributions of the previous group. When time is up, the group moves on to the next table. This step is repeated until all cooks have joined all tables.

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SAVORING THE COMMON COOKING POT



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OBJECTIVE

Agree on short-term and/ or long-term collective activities on the right to food and nutrition.

METHODOLOGY: BUILDING AN ACTION PLAN

After cooks have shared their lived experiences (SHARING OUR RECIPES) and discussed the tools and actions they wish to carry out (TASTING THE FLAVOURS), cooks design an effective political action plan on the right to food and nutrition.

STEP 0: Cooks do an energizer. For example, a cook begins with a mechanical noise and motion, repeated in machine-like fashion. Other cooks connect themselves when they see a place in the machine where they would like to fit in.

STEP 1: Someone from the group provides a short summary of the previous outcomes.

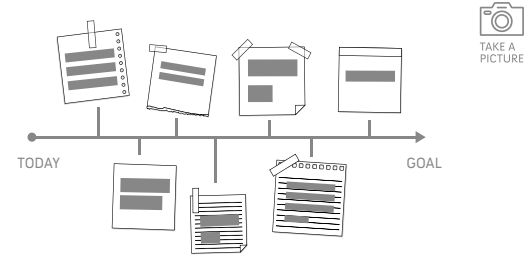
STEP 2: A timeline is drawn in front of all cooks.

STEP 3: The facilitation group presents the actions and tools identified by cooks in each of the tables in TASTING THE FLAVOURS.

STEP 4: The discussion is opened up for all cooks to decide which of those actions are to be included in the timeline. Facilitators can guide the discussion on each action and the overall action plan by raising a series of guiding questions.

STEP 5: Whenever an action is agreed by the group, a card is placed in the timeline highlighting:

- » the expected date to carry out the action; and
- » the main responsible person or organization coordinating the action.



STEP 6: After the timeline is completed and the action plan ratified by all cooks, the entire group evaluates the achieved outcomes of the overall meeting.

STEP 7: Don't forget to wrap up with a closing up activity!

REFERENCE CARDS:

'COOKING UP POLITICAL AGENDAS'

A FEMINIST GUIDE ON THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND NUTRITION FOR WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS

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